

Conference Report Highlights

August 28, 1998

Highlights of Conference Report on the Texas Low-Level Radioactive Waste Disposal Compact Consent Act (H.R. 629)

The Senate by unanimous consent on Tuesday, September 1, will proceed to the consideration of the conference report (H.Rept. 105-630) to accompany H.R. 629 (and the conference report will be considered as having been read). Senator Hatch will control two hours, and Senator Wellstone will control two hours, after which the Senate will proceed to vote on the adoption of the conference report.

The House on July 29, 1998, approved the conference report by a 305-117 margin. The Senate Judiciary Committee reported its version of the bill, S. 270, on March 20 of last year. The Senate by unanimous consent on April 1, 1998, agreed to H.R. 629 (the language of S. 270 was inserted in H.R. 629), as amended by Senator Wellstone. The Wellstone amendments (detailed below) were not contained in the conference report.

- The conference report would grant the consent of Congress to the Texas Low-Level Radioactive Waste Disposal Compact. The Compact is an agreement among the States of Texas (the host state), Maine, and Vermont, and was entered into in fulfillment of the States' responsibility under the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act (P.L. 96-573, as amended) to develop facilities for the disposal of low-level radioactive waste generated within their borders.
- The Compact has been approved by the State legislatures and Governors of Texas, Maine, and Vermont. The State of Maine approved the compact by a public referendum. The Compact also states that the commission created to administer the disposal facility shall determine through a site selection process the location of the facility. The Compact does not designate a specific site.
- The Compact specifies that the State of Texas will host the disposal facility and the Compact provides that no low-level radioactive waste may be exported from or imported to the regional facility except with the approval of the governing commission of the Compact.

During consideration in the Senate on April 1, two amendments by Senator Wellstone were accepted. The first limited the storage of waste to that produced by the three states. The second was an environmental justice amendment. Representative Doggett (D-Texas, 10th district) offered an amendment similar to the first Wellstone amendment when the bill passed the House. The governors of Texas, Maine, and Vermont had opposed any amendments to the compact because a revised compact would have required the member states to go through a lengthy re-ratification process. Both amendments were removed in conference.